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BEST SNOW BREAKS FOR EVERY BUDGET

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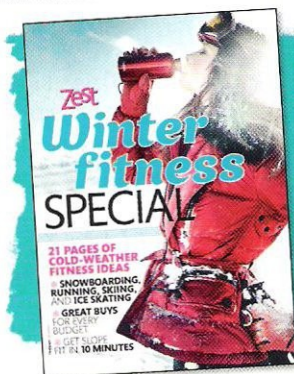
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A woman in black ski gear, including a helmet, goggles, and gloves, stands on a snowy slope. She is wearing black ski boots and skis. The background shows a bright, sunny day with snow-covered mountains and a clear sky. The text "Hit the slopes" is overlaid on the image in large, bold letters.

Hit the slopes

Whether you're a seasoned skier or a nervous snowboard newbie, we've got the best breaks for you

BEST FOR

Nervous skiers

'Life coaching conquered my ski fears'

Rebecca Newman beat her slope stress with a life-coaching ski camp in Aspen

As a child, I skied under a safety fence, and was left clinging to a tree, my feet dangling over a precipice. Since then, despite many lessons, I've never felt at ease on the slopes and often go rigid with fear.

A women's ski camp promised salvation.

The Aspen Divas Ski & Coaching Week is run by Aspen Team Diva – female ski pros and life coaches Kathryn Mayer and Connie Charles. Its aim is to help you understand

your stress reactions out on the hill, learn to overcome them, and to use the experience to build tools to manage stress in everyday life. 'No matter what kind of skier you are, whether you're facing the Olympic downhill or your first blue run, you need to work on what is going on in your head,' says Connie.

Before we hit the slopes, the six of us are given a psychological questionnaire, with

queries along the lines of 'Would you rather be a pilot or a secretary?' I was sceptical that a quiz could help me ski, but it revealed I learned best with a target and one-on-one tuition, so this is what the ski coaches concentrate on. I also discover

that my stress reaction is to freeze and imagine the worst. 'Instead of winding yourself up, you need to point yourself down the run and get on with it,' says Kathryn.

Skis on, my instructor Kelly appraises me in private while we're on the chair lifts,

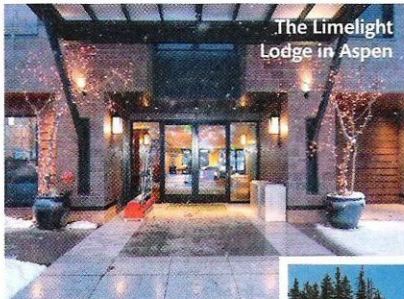
and gives me a clear target: taller posture. She praises us for every improvement, building our self-belief and

at the same time giving us space to work things through without over-instruction.

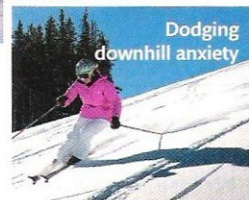
As for Aspen itself, it's truly a heart-lifting place to ski. The powder is light, spraying

out in neat plumes as we cruise down slopes that – by European standards – are empty.

By the third day, both my body position and attitude have changed completely, and I'm happy to keep pace with two other accomplished skiers. At this point, Kelly decides I'm ready for the double black diamond mogul field. I'm terrified. But instead of stalling at the top, I go for it and find it's so much easier to do when I don't overthink. Heck, I even enjoy it. After a week's stay, I've learned so much about my personality traits and also how to handle times of tension. A win-win.



The Limelight Lodge in Aspen



Dodging downhill anxiety

The facts

The Aspen Divas Ski & Coaching Week (aspenteamdiva.com) in February 2012 costs from \$2,299 (£1,457) per person, including a four-day lift pass with up to five hours of daily tuition. Seven nights' B&B at the Limelight Lodge costs from £1,697 per person, including flights and transfers with Ski Independence (ski-i.com).

BEST FOR

Budget

'Snowboarding in Scotland is great value'

Rebecca Barnes finds powder without spending a fortune

Ski trips don't come cheap. Not only is there the price of a lift pass and the gear, but there's the cost of travel and often pricey resorts. And as a newbie to snowboarding, I don't want to spend a lot on something I might not even enjoy. So, with excellent snow reports for the second year running, Scotland's Glenshee, meaning Glen of the Fairies, is where I'm going for my first snowboarding outing. It's nine hours on the sleeper train from London to Dundee, and an hour after jumping into a hire car, I'm pulling into the car park at The Bridge of Cally Hotel, my home for the weekend. Perfect for snow-sports enthusiasts, the hotel is at the foothills of Glenshee, and just a 30-minute drive from the slopes.

Despite having skied in the past, I'm under no illusions that I will be a natural snowboarder. Yet with three private lessons and my equipment booked for the weekend, I am hoping to at least grasp the basics.

Glenshee, which has 36 runs across three valleys, is ideal for beginners as the nursery slope is uncrowded and there are easy green runs to practise on. 'There are days here that equal, if not surpass, any ski resort in Europe,' my instructor Callum tells me. And with the sun beating down on Scotland's largest and most popular ski area, I understand what he means. After my first lesson, I've mastered the basics and by day three, I've moved on to a blue run and feel a real rush of satisfaction when I make it to the bottom.

This is more than I hoped to achieve in a weekend, and I now feel confident enough to board anywhere in the world, although I'm not sure why I would after my experience on the Scottish slopes. →



Rebecca learns to snowboard on a budget



The facts

B&B at The Bridge of Cally Hotel (bridgeofcallyhotel.com) costs from £35 per person per night. A 90-minute group snowboarding lesson, full equipment hire and a beginner's lift pass at Glenshee costs £50 (ski-glenshee.co.uk).